DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 993 SP 022 852

AUTHOR McQueen, Theona
TITLE Evolution in Bahamian Education: An Experiment with an International Teacher Education Program.
PUB DATE Jul 83
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Exchange; Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; Developing Nations; *Educational Development; Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *International Educational Exchange; *Nationalism; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Teacher Education Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Bahamas; *University of Miami FL

ABSTRACT

This paper describes how a plan for the University of Miami (Florida) to conduct college classes in the Bahamas was formulated and implemented. In July 1973, immediately after their country gained independence, a handful of Bahamian students, sponsored by their newly elected government, enrolled at the University of Miami. Stimulated by their personal interests, their experiences as colonials, and their commitment to a newly liberalized homeland, these students secured from their Ministry of Education and Culture an invitation to administrators from the University of Miami to discuss possibilites for bringing higher education to the Bahamas. The program, which began operating in 1975, has been a milestone in Bahamian education and in the development of the University of Miami as well. The program is committed to: (1) providing relevant education and avoiding intellectual colonialism; (2) maintaining the quality of education in an external setting comparable with campus programs; and (3) providing education to assist individual Bahamians and the government in the attainment of their goals. Students and teachers alike have also worked at "Bahamianization" of university curriculum. (JMK)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED232993

# Evolution in Bahamian Education: An Experiment With an International Teacher Education Program

Theona McQueen, Ed.D., Professor
School of Education and Allied Professions
University of Miami
Coral Gables, Fl. 33124
(305) 284-2262

SP 022 852

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Theona McQueen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"Third World" nations are experiencing the unrelenting, powerful, and often sudden impact of world industrialization; one of these nations is the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Its close proximity to the United States and the one and one half million American and European tourists who visit the Bahamas annually have given the Bahamians a look at world affluence. They are anxious to be a part of a world which profits economically from science, technology, and business; and they recognize the need for education to keep pace with economic growth.

Subtly and almost unnoticed within and without the country, an evolution in education has been effected within the last decade. This is the story of that evolution and the quality of the change growing out of a partnership between the University of Miami and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Nassau.

Background of the Program

The Bahamas is a unique country with a unique history. Briefly, the population was estimated at 231,100 in 1980; the annual growth rate is 2.4%.[1] Twelve islands, including New Providence (Nassau, 136,800), Grand Bahama (Freeport, 57,800), and ten other islands house most of the population of this "island nation". The Bahamas is a group of about 700 islands and more than 2,000 cays with a total land area of 5,400 square miles located approximately 50 miles off the coasts of Florida, Cuba, and Haiti. Geographically speaking, the Bahamas is an archipelagic nation—literally a string of islands,

cays, and reefs which stretch in a northwest to southeast direction.

The Lucayan Indians settled the islands in the 9th Century, A.D. Then, on October 12, 1492, Columbus landed on San Salvador Island in what is now a part of the Bahama chain. The Spanish adverturers to the islands enslaved the Indians and soon extinguished the race. Refugees from England, escaping religious persecution, settled some of the islands and the Bahamas were claimed by the British as their own in 1629. American colonists loyal to the British Crown during the American Revolution and Americans from the Confederacy following the Civil War chose the Bahamas as a political haven. From the beginning, blacks from Africa were introduced as slaves. Approximately ninety percent of the present population is black of mixed African and European descent. The white population, for the most part is descended from the British and American settlers.

From the time of Columbus' discovery to the present, the Bahamas has experienced wide fluctuations in economic security. Prosperity was beyond the control of the Bahamians and has usually depended upon the whims of the outside world. There were boom times during the American Revolution, the slave trade period, the American Civil War, The American Prohibition Era, and the First and Second World Wars. The intervening years have been bleak, marked by unemployment, starvation and emigration.

Historically, education in the Bahamas as a British Colony was primarily the province of the priviledged class. The absence of institutions of higher learning and the exorbitant cost of educating

Bahamians abroad made higher education accessible only to a selected few. When the Emancipation Act of 1834 freed the slaves, this added to the problem of providing education for all persons. Because of poverty and indifference, education never kept pace with population increases.[2] E. J. Bowe summarized the era from emancipation to 1967 when he stated, "...education had failed to meet the needs of a growing population and to recognize what public education was intended for, beyond establishing a limited personal status for a minority."[3]

In 1967, with the advent of Lynden Pindling and the Peoples Liberal Party (PLP), white rule ended in the Bahamas. This transition is a segment of a "quiet revolution" marked by a transfer of power to the black majority. Independence and Commonwealth status were achieved on July 10, 1973.[4]

> Prime Minister Pindling knowing that future independence from England presented a need to develop black leaders, sought to place blacks into previously all-white leadership roles. He equated Bahamianization with development of black self-identity.
>
> ..Bahamianization, pragmatically, was an effort to push more Bahamian Blacks...into white collar jobs. Blacks were favored in employment for the first time. Bahamanization, similarly, caused concern for white Bahamians and foreign investors. Foreigners were discouraged from obtaining work permits unless a Bahamian Black was also trained to eventually succeed to the job.[5]

Under British rule, a privileged few Bahamians had gone to England to study. They were rarely, if ever, permitted to remain long enough to obtain the academic credentials to make them eligible

for administrative positions in government, business, or education; hence, they were unsuccessful in surmounting the "colonial system". Consequently, many expatriates had been hired to take positions of responsibility. In an attempt by the new Bahamian government to rectify the situation, the transfer of responsible positions to Bahamians took place in a decisive manner.

The new government, under the PLP, sought to end economic dependence on tourism and banking by diversifying the economy. Expansion in agriculture, marine sciences, fishing, and petrochemical industries was a goal to be achieved. In education, emphasis was to be placed on vocational and technical training. Every child was to be allowed to develop according to his potential while careful attention was given to the manpower and economic requirements of the nation.[6]

Immediately following independence in 1974, the College of the Bahamas (COB) was created by legislation of the Parliament. It was the amalgamation of the Bahamas Teachers' College, C. R. Walker Technical College, San Salvador Teacher's College, and the "Sixth-Form" programs of the Government High School. The COB is a locally-oriented, multi-purpose, tertiary level educational institution offering general and specialized programs to both full and part-time students. It was founded in response to the Bahamian society's need for an educated, highly skilled, and technically better prepared citizenry. It is committed to meeting the special needs and conditions of the nation and it is publicly financed.[7]

In 1974, with the goals of the new government in mind and with nationalism running high, a handful of Bahamian students sponsored by the government enrolled at the University of Miami. Stimulated by their own desires and commitment to their newly liberalized homeland, these early students had a dream——that of bringing higher education, not provided by the COB, to the new Commonwealth of the Bahamas and placing it within the reach of many Bahamians. These students secured from the Ministry of Education and Culture an invitation to administrators form the University of Miami's School of Education and Allied Professions, the School of Business, and the School of Continuing Studies. The purpose was to discuss possibilities for on-site education for those Bahamians interested in business and teaching.

In late 1975, negotiations began between the University of Miami and Bahamian representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Teachers' Union, Bankers groups, and the College of the Bahamas. The goal was to formulate a plan for the University of Miami to conduct classes in the Bahamas.

Organization of the Program

In the summer of 1975, under the auspices of the School of Continuing Studies, the University conducted a five-week summer session in Nassau. The Bahamian government provided classrooms at the College of the Bahamas and various other locations. The students paid their own tuition fees. The first group to enroll included

many Bahamians in positions of responsibility--the power elite who were anxious to qualify academically for the positions they already held. Also, among this first group of enrollees, were many expatriates.

After experiencing as Colonials educational morsels of academia in a piecemeal manner, the Bahamians wanted degree programs. A vast majority of those enrolled in the program had completed a two-year program at the COB; they were teachers and administrators in the Bahamian schools, or people employed in the business world. Many had replaced expatriates in business as part of the government's policy to Bahamanize.

University of Miami officials investigated the program at COB and agreed to accept a maximum of 60 semester hour credits on a planned program for a Bachelor's degree with a major in Elementary or Secondary Education. Those interested in business enrolled with a view to the completion of the Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in Business Administration.

After the first summer session, the strong demand for degree programs resulted in arrangements to conduct classes on a continuing basis. The Bahamians were anxious to get on with the business of education. Classes were offered on a semester basis. Instructors flew to Nassau on weekends and taught classes from 8:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. for seven or eight Saturdays with classes scheduled to meet every two weeks. The program was up and soaring! On May 21, 1977, the first graduation exercises were held in Nassau.[8]

As semesters and summer schools continued, Bahamians from throughout the islands "wanted in." Classes were opened in Freeport, the country's second largest population center, at Hawksbill High School. Students from Andros, Eleuthera, and other islands flew to either Nassau or Freeport to attend classes. In addition, Sunday classes were offered on the same schedule as the Saturday classes. This was done for two reasons: (1) there was a large contingent of Seventh Day Adventists who would not attend Saturday classes, and (2) other student groups preferred to attend on Sundays for various personal reasons. In 1979, the enrollment peaked at more than 600 students. Currently there are no regularly scheduled classes in Nassau or Freeport. Classes will resume when needed.

Quality Control

The University of Miami was committed to: a) provide relevant education and avoid intellectual Colonialism; b) maintain the quality of education in an external setting comparable with campus programs; and c) provide education to assist individual Bahamians and the Government in the attainment of their goals. These commitments were preserved and sustained by administrative design and personal dedication of both faculty and students.

Relevance and Bahamianization

The concept of Bahamianization and its impact was stimulating and challenging to University instructors and the Bahamian students.

"Bahamianization" (relevant courses, modifications, etcetera) of the University curriculum was necessary to avoid intellectual Colonialism. Curriculum designed for American Teachers could not be transferred intact to Bahamian teachers. Course content, models, references, examples and teaching priorities were often changed. The selection of courses offered was aimed at enhancing knowledge in areas which appeared to have particular relevance for the Bahamians because of their geography, history, politics, economics, or culture. General education courses required for the Bachelor's degree included many options. Georgraphy of the Carribean, Comparative Literature of the Black World, and Ethnography of Bahamian Culture were offered along with the "traditional" courses such as American History, Englaish History, Victorian Poetry, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

Instructional Resources

Library and other teaching facilities and materials were carefully considered. At the undergraduate and particularly at the graduate level, instructors enriched their courses with books and current periodicals. "Flying libraries" became "rotating libraries" in the classrooms. Students took library materials and shared them at their work-place. Instructors carried large quantities of mimeographed handouts to each class session.

The COB library greatly improved its acquisitions after the University of Miami program began, and students in the University program began frequenting the COB library. Professors from the University collected books from colleagues and donated them to the COB library. In addition, books for children and young adults were collected and donated to several schools in Nassau and Freeport. University instructors indicate the Bahamian students often used more current

materials than their counterparts on the Coral Gables campus. Films and film strips were frequently used. Projectors from the COB were available and the University assigned audio-visual equipment to the Bahamian Centers.

Class Schedules

Classes were scheduled to meet the same number of contact hours as those on campus--seven days with a minimum of five hours each. Some instructors gave extra sessions in the evening before the regularly scheduled classes. Final examinations were scheduled the last session of the term.

Many Bahamians who frequented Miami for shopping, medical appointments, visiting relatives, and giving birth, added visits to their University to that list of activities. Many of the more affluent students visited the campus out of curiosity and to confer with their instructors on a more personal level. To make travel affordable for all students, special travel arrangements were made on several occasions and "Bahamian Weekends" for students were held on the Miami campus. These "weekends" included use of the University library, science and computer facilities, as well as local public and private schools and day care facilities. The visits culminated in social evenings of dining and dancing.

Faculty

Faculty members, universally, wanted to teach in the Bahamas. Initially there was an aura of glamour about jetting off to those "languid" islands, but the hours of preparation, long sessions, flight delays, mosquitoes, and tropical humidity sans air-conditioning soon dimmed the glamour. Long class sessions required detailed and thorough planning.

Lectures had to be carefully planned and revised to accommodate the needs and interests of the students.

Many professors visited Bahamian schools, lectured to civic groups, attended school fairs, picnics, art exhibits, etc. An observer said: "The University of Miami faculty became Bahamianized more rapidly than the Bahamians." Most faculty agree the Bahamian experience has enriched their lives and expanded their knowledge.

Students

In the Education program, approximately 98 percent of the students had two years of college work at the COB or other Caribbean college. The remainder were expatriates with similar amounts of schooling in England, Canada, or elsewhere. Almost one hundred percent taught in Bahamian schools, either private or public, and ranged in age from the 20's to the 50's.

The students were drawn from a wide range of socio-economic groups. The distribution of their social and economic backgrounds is comparable to teachers in the United States. However, Bahamian teachers generally have more status and respect in the community than their American counterparts. They already had more schooling than the overwhelming majority of their fellow countrymen and they were the civic and religious leaders in their communities.

These mature, dedicated students appreciated the efforts of professors. They cheered excellent lectures, entertained the professors in their homes, and almost every class bought the instructor a gift which was selected with careful thought and sensitivity. This appreciation of faculty effort

contributed to the vigor and enthusiasm of each professor who taught there. There is general agreement among faculty that the character of the Bahamian student enhanced the quality of the program.

Instructors soon realized the Bahamians were neither Black Americans nor Black Britons, and many were determined to explore the uniqueness of Bahamian culture. They observed, they listened, and they read about their hosts. Most Bahamian history books have been written by English authors. Writings by Bahamians are meager, but these were ferreted out and shared. Chamber of Commerce publications, cookbooks, and copies of local newspapers as well as current scholarly books, such as The Quiet Revolution[9] and Neuroses In The Sun,[10] were read and discussed by groups of instructors. Most professors realized the need to understand the Bahamian culture, experience, and dream.

## Bahamianization

Early in the program some students saw Bahamianization only in terms of things Bahamian. This concept gradually changed and now focuses on the Bahamas in the world community. Anthropology, history, economics, political science, literature, philosophy, and art are now more often viewed from a perspective which encourages and permits appreciation of things Bahamian within a more global perspective. There is a fierce pride in their "nation building" and they view this task with a broadened determination. They know they have unique problems and they must have unique solutions. They want their schools to be neither American nor British; they will be Bahamian.

Summary

The Associate Dean of the School of Education and Allied Professions, in an open letter to graduates of the Bahamas program, wrote:

> It (University of Miami) considers the Bahamas as an integral part of the sphere it is servicing as well as a partner in its ongoing effort to improve education. This program illustrates that education has an international dimension.
>
> At a time when nations were enchanted by nationalistic "manifest destiny," international education was viewed as utopian and illusory. This is no longer so...[11]

A concentration of teachers and school administrators "trained" in one institution of higher learning carries potential impact for quality education for an entire nation. This knowledge is both gratifying and sobering. Professors in the School of Education have confidence their efforts have effected immediate change and will effect long range changes in Bahamian schools, at all levels--thereby fostering an improved quality of life.

The Associate Dean of the School of Business Administration said:

> In the Bahamas, we did what a University is supposed to do; we advanced our realm of knowledge and there is great internal pride in our accomplishment. We are educating those in charge of the Bahamian destiny. The business community is now managed by Bahamians; currently, six members of Parliament are graduates of the School of Business and three are Ministers in the Cabinet.[12]

Geography, economic capriciousness, and colonialism have conspired to isolate, by-pass, and stultify the development of the multi-ethnic Bahamian people. But against a background of throbbing nationalism, the Bahamians armed with their human and economic potential, and the University of Miami, with its commitment to quality, have forged an alliance. Together, they have created an unparalleled evolution in education and a landmark in the development of a responsible nation.

## Footnotes

[1]U.S. Department of State, Bahamas, Post Report (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August, 1980), p. 1.

[2]Michael Cratin, A History of the Bahamas (St. James Place, London: Collins, 1968), p. 212.

[3]E. J. Bowe, "Education in the Bahamas: From a Socio-Economic Viewpoint," (Undergraduate Paper, University of London ),

[4]Doris Johnson, The Quiet Revolution (Nassau, N.P. Bahamas: Family Islands Press Limited, 1972), 177pp.

[5]Paul Redlhammer, "A Comparison Between the Technical-Function and Status Conflict Theories in Bahamian Education," (Coral Gables, Florida, University of Miami, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976), pp. 76-77.

[6]Bahamas, Ministry of Education and Culture, Focus on the Future: White Paper on Education (Nassau Bahamas: Government Printing Office, 1973).

[7]Handbook, College of the Bahamas, 1977-78, p. 1.

[8]As of May 8, 1981, 269 Bahamians have earned Master's degrees and 252 have earned Bachelor's degrees.

[9]Johnson, Ibid., 177 pp.

[10]Timothy McCartney, Neuroses In The Sun (Nassau, N.P. Bahamas: Executive Ideas of the Bahamas, Limited, 1971), 166 pp.

[11]Robert Hendricks, Associate Dean, School of Education, University of Miami, Miami, Florida, Curriculum Comment in Graduation Review, May 1980, p. 25.

[12]Interview with Nicholas Glaskowsky, Associate Dean, School of Business, University of Miami, Miami, Florida, August 20, 1981.